South Carolina Department of Education Recommendations for Improving Student Nutrition and Physical Activity

Report of the SDE Task Force on Student Nutrition and Physical Activity



Example 2.1 Issued by the **South Carolina Department of Education**

Inez Moore Tenenbaum State Superintendent of Education

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Preface

Concerned by the evidence that the health of our children is increasingly being compromised by obesity—in the nation as a whole and particularly in South Carolina—and faced with the fact that South Carolina's rates of cardiovascular disease are among the highest in the country, State Superintendent Inez Tenenbaum invited a group of interested people to work together on the Student Nutrition and Physical Activity Task Force. Parents, school personnel, legislators, and university experts, together with representatives of the health department, the medical community, and South Carolina's food industry, reviewed national recommendations and evidence and made recommendations for improving nutrition and physical activity in South Carolina's schools.

The Task Force recognizes that many schools and districts are already making changes to ensure a health-promoting school environment for their students, particularly in the areas of nutrition and physical activity. For those schools and districts beginning to make improvements, we hope that the recommendations in this document will be of benefit. They were developed with the best interest of students' health and academic achievement in mind.

The purpose of this document is to offer recommendations for the development of policies and guidelines at the state and local level that will strengthen school nutrition and physical activity programs in South Carolina's public schools. Addressing the issues that underlie the soaring rates of overweight children and adolescents in our state and nation, these recommendations are intended to provide our children with healthier food and beverage options and increased opportunities for physical activity.

The State Department of Education reserves the right to modify its recommendations in any ways that are consistent with the agency's philosophy and mission.

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Background Briefs

- ? "Children's health and well-being play a critical role in their ability to come to school ready to learn and in their overall academic achievement," says the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices. "Schools have a unique opportunity to provide children and adolescents the skills and support they need to adopt healthy behaviors. . . . Teachers and other school personnel can educate, support and reinforce students' health behaviors, including promoting healthy eating and regular physical activity. States can take several steps to encourage healthy lifestyles through school-based efforts . . ." ("Preventing Obesity" 2003).
- ? Revenues from federal reimbursements for school meals served to children and from the sale of food are the principal sources of revenue for school food services. Only a small portion of total revenues comes from state and local sources. Districts often set school meal prices at a rate that does not cover the actual cost of the meal.

Demands for improving academic performance while at the same time facing reduced funding have increased the pressure on schools to use fund-raising to supplement their operating budget. Schools can not only make money from food and beverage vending but also acquire from vendors such items as athletic uniforms and scoreboards in exchange for advertising.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) uses the term "competitive foods" to describe two categories of foods: "foods of minimal nutritional value" (FMNV) and "All other foods offered for individual sale . . . at any time during the school day anywhere on the school campus, including the school food service areas" (USDA 2001a). Federal law does not provide specifics about how competitive foods—except for FMNV—should be regulated, and there is no specific authority enabling the USDA to regulate beyond the food service area during meal periods (USDA 2001a), and few schools in South Carolina have standards for foods that are brought to the school or are sold at the school in competition with the school meals programs.

As the USDA explains it, Section 10(b) of the Child Nutrition Act (CNA) of 1966 permits the proceeds from the sale of competitive foods in food service areas during meal periods to inure to the benefit of schools or student organizations as well as to the food service account. This wording inadvertently supports the notion that food sales are an excellent way to increase funds for the schools or student organizations and thus puts schools in the position of competing with their own school meal programs for revenue, contributing to decreases in student participation in the school meals programs with the related loss of revenue to support the viability of the programs (USDA 2001a).

? The school environment is sending inconsistent messages and does not provide the education our children need in order for them to learn to enjoy, select, and prepare food for themselves that will help them reach their maximum potential for health and academic achievement (USDA 2001a).

? Overweight and obesity in children is increasing steadily in South Carolina and in the nation as a whole. According to research conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), overweight doubled in the United States between 1980 and 2000 among children six to eleven years of age and tripled among those twelve to nineteen years of age ("Prevalence of Overweight" 2002). In addition, over 10 percent of younger preschool children between ages two and five are overweight, up from 7 percent in 1994 ("Obesity Still on the Rise" 2002).

Schools play an important role both in educating students and in protecting their health. "One of the most significant concerns from a public health perspective is that we know a lot of children who are overweight grow up to be overweight or obese adults, and thus at greater risk for some major health problems such as heart disease and diabetes," asserts Dr. Julie Gerberding, director of the CDC. "One critical answer to this problem is that we all must work together to help our children make physical activity a life-long habit" ("Obesity Still on the Rise" 2002).

"Overweight and obese children place significant health, social and economic costs on states," says the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices. "Youth who are obese are at an increased risk for obesity-related illnesses including heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, gallbladder disease, and osteoarthritis. . . . Costs due to obesity-related illnesses in children have more than tripled since the 1970s, from \$35 million in 1979 to \$127 million in 1999" ("Preventing Obesity" 2003).

Executive Summary: SDE Student Nutrition Recommendations

In the June 14, 1996, issue of its *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report: Recommendations and Reports*, the CDC published an article titled "Guidelines for School Health Programs to Promote Lifelong Healthy Eating," in which it asserts the following:

Healthy eating patterns in childhood and adolescence promote optimal childhood health, growth, and intellectual development; prevent immediate health problems . . . ; and may prevent long-term health problems, such as coronary heart disease, cancer, and stroke. School health programs can help children and adolescents attain full educational potential and good health by providing them with the skills, social support, and environmental reinforcement they need to adopt long-term, healthy eating behaviors. . . . School-based programs can play an important role in promoting lifelong healthy eating. . . . School-based nutrition education can improve dietary practices that affect young persons' health, growth, and intellectual development. (CDC 1996, 1–2)

I. School Nutrition Environment

- A. Adequate time and space should be provided for students to eat school meals.
- B. Nutrition education should be provided at all grade levels, prekindergarten through grade twelve.
- C. Nonfood rewards and incentives should be used to encourage student achievement and desirable behavior.
- D. School campus marketing and advertising (including advertising on vending machines, in school stores, in the cafeteria, and on closed-circuit television) should encourage healthy eating habits.
- E. Water should be accessible to students throughout the school day.
- F. Teachers and staff should be encouraged to model healthy eating and behaviors.
- G. Healthy food choices should be provided when foods are sold as concessions at school sports events and special school activities.
- H. A process should be established for community members and parents to provide input regarding any contracts for the sale of foods and beverages other than the reimbursable school meal sold in the school.

II. School Meals

- A. School meals should be made attractive to students by appealing to their taste preferences and meeting their cultural needs.
- B. School meals not only should provide the optimal nutrition that students need for growth, development, and academic achievement but also should support the development of healthful eating behaviors in students, including their learning to eat a variety of foods.
- C. School meals should be priced no lower than the cost of providing them so that school food programs are self-supporting.

III. Other Foods and Beverages (Competitive Foods)

In a 2001 report to Congress titled *Foods Sold in Competition with USDA School Meal Programs*, the USDA defines two categories of "competitive foods": "foods of minimal nutritional value" (FMNV) and "All other foods offered for individual sale . . . at any time during the school day anywhere on the school campus, including the school food service areas." Standards for competitive foods available to children in schools need to be set so that these foods are consistent with those foods served to students through the USDA school meal program.

- A. All foods sold at any public school site, prekindergarten through grade twelve, not only should provide the optimal nutrition that students need for growth, development, and academic achievement but also should support the development of healthful eating behaviors in students.
- B. All beverages sold or otherwise made available to students at any public school site, prekindergarten through grade twelve, not only should provide the optimal nutrition that students need for growth, development, and academic achievement but also should support the development of healthful eating behaviors in students.
- C. A process should be established for community members and parents to provide input regarding any contracts for the sale of foods and beverages other than the reimbursable school meal sold in the school.

Executive Summary:

SDE Student Physical Activity Recommendations

The federal Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that children and teenagers be physically active for an accumulation of at least 60 minutes daily (USDHHS and USDA 2000, 12). Yet many children today are not meeting this recommended minimum, and the results are rising rates of obesity and type 2 (adult-onset) diabetes among our nation's youth. Schools should provide opportunities for students to obtain a substantial portion of the 60 minutes of recommended daily physical activity. The physical education program is one of the primary means of educating students about physical activity skills and the value of participating regularly in physical activity throughout one's life. Other opportunities to participate in physical activity should be provided to students to assist them in getting adequate amounts of daily physical activity.

I. School Accountability and Assessment of Student Physical Activity

- A. The policy, program, and environmental needs of students with regard to physical activity should be assessed at regular intervals, and a plan for improvement should be developed.
- B. The South Carolina Physical Education Assessment model should be used to assess physical education (PE) programs with regard to their effectiveness and their adherence to the South Carolina physical education curriculum standards.
- C. The physical fitness of every student should be assessed at regular intervals, and this information should be reported to each student and his or her parents.

II. School Requirements and Opportunities for Physical Activity

- A. PE class time requirements should be increased to provide for 150 minutes of physical education per week for students in kindergarten through grade eight and the equivalent of 3 units of high school credit in grades nine through twelve.
- B. Students should be given opportunities for physical activity during the school day through daily recess periods, elective PE classes, walking programs, and the integration of physical activity into the academic curriculum.
- C. Students should be given opportunities for physical activity through a range of afterschool programs including intramurals, interscholastic athletics, and physical activity clubs.
- D. Schools should work with the community to create an environment that is safe and supportive of students' physically active commuting to and from school.

Student Nutrition

In the June 14, 1996, issue of its *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report: Recommendations and Reports*, the CDC published an article titled "Guidelines for School Health Programs to Promote Lifelong Healthy Eating," in which it asserts the following:

Healthy eating patterns in childhood and adolescence promote optimal childhood health, growth, and intellectual development; prevent immediate health problems . . . ; and may prevent long-term health problems, such as coronary heart disease, cancer, and stroke. School health programs can help children and adolescents attain full educational potential and good health by providing them with the skills, social support, and environmental reinforcement they need to adopt long-term, healthy eating behaviors. . . School-based programs can play an important role in promoting lifelong healthy eating. . . . School-based nutrition education can improve dietary practices that affect young persons' health, growth, and intellectual development. (CDC 1996, 1–2)

I. School Nutrition Environment

In a document titled *Changing the Scene: Improving the School Nutrition Environment*, published in September of 2000, the USDA poses a series of questions for America's schools to consider:

Do your students have a comfortable place to sit and eat lunch? Do they have enough time to eat? Is the lunch period too early? Too late? Does the school teach good nutrition in the classroom—and then sell soda to raise money? Are healthy food choices available at school parties and after-school activities as well as in the school dining room? Is school breakfast offered only during exam week? Are students learning about the importance of physical activity while they see physical education cut from the curriculum?

"Answering these questions," says the USDA, "will help paint a picture of the nutrition environment in your school. This is an important first step in making sure that the picture your students see is a healthy nutrition environment" (USDA 2000, 7).

The basic question "What is a healthy school nutrition environment?" the USDA answers tersely:

A healthy school nutrition environment gives students consistent, reliable health information—and ample opportunity to use it. For example, in a healthy environment:

- ? The classroom, the school dining room, and other school activities provide clear and consistent messages that explain and reinforce healthy eating and physical activity habits.
- ? Students learn to make healthy lifestyle choices not only in the classroom and the school dining room, but also at class parties, sports events—wherever they are throughout the school day.

? Students have many opportunities to practice healthy habits. They can choose from an array of healthy food options, eat in relaxed and comfortable surroundings, and enjoy daily physical activity. (USDA 2000, 7)

A healthy school nutrition environment has six central components, according to the USDA:

- ? a commitment to nutrition and physical activity,
- ? quality school meals,
- ? other healthy food choices,
- ? pleasant eating experiences,
- ? nutrition education, and
- ? marketing. (USDA 2000, 11)

Each of these components is given extended and detailed treatment in *Changing the Scene* (available online at http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/guide.pdf). In addition, the USDA, in collaboration with sixteen organizations, has developed an action kit titled "Changing the Scene: Improving the School Nutrition Environment," which is designed to be used at the state and local levels to educate decision makers about the role that the school environment plays in helping students meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Further information about the kit and an order form are online at http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthy/kit.html.

SDE RECOMMENDATIONS: SCHOOL NUTRITION ENVIRONMENT

- A. Ensure adequate time and space for students to eat school meals.
 - ? Create and maintain a safe, comfortable, and inviting place for students to eat school meals
 - ? Ensure that food lines are not too long and that students have plenty of time to eat and socialize (at least twenty minutes to eat after they have received their food).
 - ? Schedule meal periods at reasonable hours when students are hungry and ready to eat.
 - ? Ensure that time is allowed and facilities are conveniently available for students to wash their hands before and after meals.
- B. Provide nutrition education at all grade levels, prekindergarten through grade twelve.
 - ? Ensure that all students receive nutrition education that promotes healthy eating both at school and outside of school.
 - ? Focus on skill development so that students are able to learn and adopt healthy eating behaviors.
 - ? Provide more resources, including classroom materials, for teaching nutrition and its contribution to healthy living and healthy lifestyles.

- ? Use healthy food choices such as fruits and vegetables; 100 percent fruit juice; 1 percent fat or nonfat milk, yogurt, and cheese; and whole grain breads, crackers, and cereals in the classroom as a part of nutrition education lessons.
- ? Post nutrition information wherever foods and beverages are served or sold in the school.
- ? Promote healthy eating to students, parents, and teachers. For example, include "nutrition tips" in school newsletters.
- ? Assess health education programs to ensure effectiveness and adherence to the South Carolina health and safety education curriculum standards.
- C. Use nonfood rewards and incentives to encourage student achievement and desirable behavior. (Examples of nonfood rewards are extra credit, school supplies, paperback books, Nerf-type balls, jump ropes, Frisbees, stickers, extra play time, special ball games.)
- D. Ensure that school campus marketing and advertising (including advertising on vending machines, in school stores, in the cafeteria, and on closed-circuit television) encourage healthy eating habits.
- E. Make water accessible to students throughout the school day.
 - ? Ensure that drinking fountains are operable, clean, and convenient for students to access throughout the school day at locations both outdoors and indoors. Active children need easy access to drinking water.
 - ? Develop guidelines to allow students to have bottled water in the classroom. Good hydration is essential to optimal physical and academic performance.
- F. Encourage teachers and staff to model healthy eating.
 - ? Offer wellness programs for faculty and staff that include personalized instruction about healthy eating to motivate and encourage teachers to engage in healthy eating and physical activity behaviors.
- G. Provide healthy food choices when foods are sold as concessions at school sports events and special school activities—frozen yogurt, fruit smoothies, fruits, popcorn, low-fat and nonfat milk, cheese, and crackers, for example. Offering healthy options will support students and adults in making healthful eating decisions.
 - ? Post the nutritional values of foods sold at the concessions (e.g., number of calories per serving, percent of fat, percent of sugar, recommended serving sizes), or post signage indicating what foods are healthy choices (based on criteria established elsewhere in this document).
 - ? Ensure that the portions of foods sold on campus are not supersized but rather are comparable to the portions of foods served in school meals.

H. Establish a process for community members and parents to provide input regarding any contracts for the sale of foods and beverages other than the reimbursable school meal sold in the school.

II. School Meals

Federal law—specifically, the National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. § 1758(f), the National School Lunch Program (7 C.F.R. § 210.10), and the School Breakfast Program (7 C.F.R. § 220.8)—regulates the nutritional quality of foods served in the nation's school meal programs. For a school meal program to receive USDA subsidies, school meals must meet nutrition standards for saturated fat, vitamins, minerals, protein, calories, and portion sizes.

School meal services include three programs: school lunches, school breakfasts, and after-school snacks.

School Lunch Program. The National School Lunch Act (Pub. L. No. 79-396) was enacted by the United States Congress in 1946, as a "measure of national security, to safeguard the health and well-being of the Nation's children" (42 U.S.C. § 1751, "Congressional declaration of policy").

In 1994, Congress passed the Healthy Meals for Healthy Americans Act (Pub. L. No. 103-448) as part of the School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children. The Act requires that meals served by school food services meet the nutrition standards that are set forth in two federal documents: *Recommended Daily Allowances*, issued by the National Academy of Sciences and the National Research Council, and *Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, a joint publication of the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Agriculture. In May of 1996, President Bill Clinton signed the Healthy Meals for Children Act (Pub. L. No. 104-149), which provides that schools may use "any reasonable approach" to menu planning as long as that approach conforms to federal dietary and nutrition guidelines.

Today, the Food and Nutrition Service of the USDA stresses that "School lunches must meet the applicable recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which recommend that no more than 30 percent of an individual's calories come from fat, and less than 10 percent from saturated fat. Regulations also establish a standard for school lunches to provide one-third of the Recommended Dietary Allowances of protein, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, iron, calcium, and calories" ("National School Lunch Program" 2003).

"School lunches must meet Federal nutrition requirements," the Food and Nutrition Service reiterates, "but decisions about what specific foods to serve and how they are prepared," the agency importantly emphasizes, "are made by local school food authorities" ("National School Lunch Program" 2003).

School Breakfast Program. The USDA Food and Nutrition Service asserts the following concerning school breakfast program requirements:

School breakfasts must meet the applicable recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans which recommend that no more than 30 percent of an individual's calories come from fat, and less than 10 percent from saturated fat. In addition, breakfasts must provide one-fourth of the Recommended Dietary Allowance for protein, calcium, iron, Vitamin A, Vitamin C and calories. The decisions about what specific food to serve and how they are prepared are made by local school food authorities. ("School Breakfast Program" 2003)

The use of breakfast foods and recipes with a lower fat content and a moderate sugar and salt content is encouraged. All elementary schools with 60 percent or more of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals are encouraged to serve breakfast to all children in the classrooms. Middle or junior high schools and high schools are encouraged to provide breakfast to students in either homerooms or classrooms.

After-School Snack Program. The after-school snack program was authorized by Congress in 1998 to enhance nutrition for all children. This program allows any school that is eligible to operate the National School Lunch Program to receive reimbursement for snacks served to students who are involved in enrichment or education programs after their school day has ended. For more information, contact the SDE's Office of School Food Services and Nutrition or go online at http://www.myscschools.com/offices/sfsn/pages/snack.htm.

Schools should take advantage of the after-school snack program to provide children not only with healthy snacks but also with special opportunities such as physical activity, skill building, and homework help.

SDE RECOMMENDATIONS: SCHOOL MEALS

- A. Ensure that school food service meals are made attractive to students by appealing to their taste preferences and meeting their cultural needs.
 - ? Encourage students to eat school meals by offering a choice of entrées at lunch—a minimum of two in elementary schools, three in middle and junior high schools (one choice may be an entrée salad), and four in high schools (one choice may be an entrée salad).
 - ? Encourage input regarding the selection of food items to be offered at all grade levels in the school meal programs by promoting and encouraging student and parent participation in taste-testing events, in menu-review panels, and in online recipe reviewing.
 - ? Require that school cafeteria managers meet with student advisory committees in grades four through twelve a minimum of twice each year.

- ? Allow students to purchase at à la carte prices additional servings of any food item that is part of a reimbursable school meal (serving sizes should be comparable to the those of the meal components).
- B. Ensure that school food service meals not only provide the optimal nutrition that students need for growth, development, and academic achievement but also support the development of healthful eating behaviors in students, including their learning to eat a variety of foods.
 - ? Offer a minimum of three milk choices (2 percent fat, 1 percent fat, and nonfat milk) for all grade levels at breakfast and lunch. Restrict access to whole milk.
 - ? Offer a low-fat meal choice (30 percent or less of calories from fat) at every meal.
 - ? Provide low-fat and nonfat salad dressings.
 - ? Provide information on calories, percentages of fat, and serving sizes of school meal items to help children select appropriate portions of food.
 - ? Offer a minimum of four choices of fruits and vegetables daily, including fresh fruits and vegetables in season at all grade levels (salad bars or prepackaged salads may be included).
 - ? Offer whole-grain foods in all programs at all grade levels whenever possible to meet bread and cereal requirements.
 - ? Encourage preschool, kindergarten, and elementary students to try a variety of foods by serving the full reimbursable meal.
- C. Ensure that school meals are priced no lower than the cost of providing them so that school food programs are self-supporting.

III. Other Foods and Beverages (Competitive Foods)

In a 2001 report to Congress titled *Foods Sold in Competition with USDA School Meal Programs*, the USDA defines two categories of "competitive foods": "foods of minimal nutritional value" (FMNV) and "All other foods offered for individual sale" at a school.

FMNV belong to the specific categories that are described in Appendix B of the regulations for the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program (Parts 210 and 220, respectively, of the Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations). These regulations prohibit the sale of FMNV in the food service areas during the school meal periods but do not prohibit their sale outside the food service area at any time during the school day. States and local school food authorities, however, may impose additional restrictions (USDA 2001a).

The broad directive of the federal law is implemented in Section 210.11 of the National School Lunch Program regulations and Section 220.12 of the School Breakfast Program regulations, which require state agencies and local school food authorities to establish such rules or regulations as are necessary to control the sale of competitive foods. At a minimum, these rules or regulations must prohibit the sale of FMNV in the food service areas during meal periods. State agencies and local school food authorities are authorized to impose additional restrictions on the sale of competitive foods. However, the federal regulations do not specify when it is necessary for states and local schools to establish such rules. Nor do the federal regulations require state agencies to impose sanctions when a school's competitive food practices are found to violate regulatory requirements (USDA 2001a).

Federal regulations do not prohibit the sale of "all other foods" at any time during the school day anywhere on the school campus, including the school food service areas. These foods range from second servings of foods that are part of the reimbursable school meal to foods that students purchase in addition to or in place of a reimbursable school meal, such as à la carte sales and other foods and beverages purchased from vending machines, school stores, and snack bars (USDA 2001a).

Examining the context in which competitive foods are being sold today in America's schools, the USDA goes on to explain in its report to Congress that the decision made by schools to provide these alternative food and beverages has been driven by a variety of factors: student preferences, increased financial demands and limited resources, "pouring rights" contracts, preparation and serving space limitations, inadequate meal periods, and lack of education standards for school food service directors or managers.

On the subject of student preferences, the USDA asserts:

One of the biggest challenges school meal program managers face is the competition with foods that are marketed to children through multi-million-dollar, glitzy, and sophisticated advertising campaigns. Today's students come to school with established preferences for fast foods, sweetened beverages and salty snacks. In addition, students often prefer visiting with friends around vending machines or snack bars to standing in a long line for a school meal and eating it in a crowded cafeteria.

Increased financial demands and limited resources, says the USDA, make "schools often put nutrition at the bottom of the priority list":

School food service programs, which were once regular line items in local school operating budgets, must often be completely self-supporting. Many schools are compensating for the loss of funds due to budget cuts by increasing prices for school meals and/or increasing the sale of a la carte foods and fast food options in the school dining room. (USDA 2001a)

The USDA concludes its report with a list of recommendations for Congress to consider with regard to foods and beverages available to students in the nation's schools. It prefaces that list with the following statement:

While USDA has been able to develop valuable educational initiatives and mobilize influential nutrition and health organizations to promote a healthy school nutrition environment, its efforts to establish an effective competitive foods policy has been constrained by current legislation. USDA and the Congress must work together to forge a national nutrition policy. USDA requests that the Congress consider the following actions recommended by program operators and other partners to strengthen USDA's ability—and the ability of the States and local schools—to foster a healthier school nutrition environment in communities across America. (USDA 2001a)

SDE RECOMMENDATIONS: OTHER FOODS AND BEVERAGES (COMPETITIVE FOODS)

- A. Ensure that all foods sold at any public school site, prekindergarten through grade twelve, not only provide the optimal nutrition that students need for growth, development, and academic achievement but also support the development of healthful eating behaviors in students.
 - ? Ensure that one serving of snacks, sweets, and side dishes has no more than 30 percent of calories from fat, less than 10 percent calories from saturated fat, no more than 10 percent of calories from trans-fatty acids, and no more than 35 percent of added sugar by weight. (Note: Nuts, seeds, and some cheeses are exceptions. Although more than 30 percent of their calories come from fat, these foods can be considered appropriate and nutritious snacks when served in small portions.)
 - ? Limit single-serving food items sold to students to the following maximum portion sizes: 1.25 ounces for snacks (includes baked chips, crackers, popcorn, cereal, trail mix, nuts, seeds, dried fruits, jerky); 2 ounces for cookies or cereal bars; 3 ounces for other bakery items (sweet rolls, muffins, etc.); 4 ounces for frozen desserts, including ice cream; 8 ounces for yogurt (not frozen); and ½ cup for fried potatoes or other fried vegetables.
 - ? Ensure that single servings of entrée items and side dishes are no larger than the portions of those foods served by school food services.
 - ? Offer fruits and vegetables for sale at any location on the school site where foods are sold.

- B. Ensure that all beverages sold or otherwise made available to students at any public school site, prekindergarten through grade twelve, not only provide the optimal nutrition that students need for growth, development, and academic achievement but also support the development of healthful eating behaviors in students.
 - ? Make the following beverages available to all students: low-fat or nonfat milk, water, and 100 percent juices that do not contain added sugars or sweeteners.
 - ? Do not sell or serve the following beverages to students until after the last regularly scheduled class: soda, soft drinks, sports drinks, punches, iced teas and coffees, and fruit-based drinks that contain less than 100 percent real fruit juice or that contain added sweeteners. (Current USDA policy prohibits the sale or serving of carbonated beverages during a meal service period in the area where reimbursable meals are served and/or eaten. A school's failure to comply with this policy can result in its receiving no reimbursement for any meals for the day or period in which there was noncompliance [USDA 2001b].)
 - ? Sell no beverage—except water or reduced-fat milk—in portions larger than 12 ounces. (This recommendation is made in an effort to reduce the amount of caffeine, sugar, and empty calories consumed by students during the school day.)
- C. Establish a process for community members and parents to provide input regarding any contracts for the sale of foods and beverages other than the reimbursable school meal sold in the school.

IMPLEMENTATION METHODS: SDE STUDENT NUTRITION RECOMMENDATIONS

- ? Use the *School Health Index* (CDC 2002), or a comparable assessment tool, to assess the school's current status with regard to nutrition and physical activity and to make recommendations for improvements.
- ? Provide families with guidelines for packing healthy lunches or snacks that students will bring to school from home.
- ? Provide teachers and parents with ideas for prizes and rewards besides food that can be used as incentives in the classroom. Start the list with the physical activity rewards.
- ? Furnish principals and teachers with guidelines and suggestions for choosing healthy food items when food is used in the classroom as part of a lesson.
- ? Provide parents with information about the nutritional and educational goals and the health benefits of the school breakfast and school lunch programs.
- ? Provide principals, teachers, and other school staff with ideas on how to integrate daily breakfast into the classroom schedule. Make suggestions for foods to include in the breakfasts.

- ? Ensure that any after-school program participates in the USDA after-school snack program. Work with district school food service directors to apply for funding under this federal program.
- ? Give principals, teachers, and parents a list of foods that meet the federal criteria for lower fat, lower sugar, and smaller portion sizes to serve to students.
- ? Provide parent organizations and teachers with a list of ideas for fund-raisers that include the sale of nonfood items and healthy food alternatives such as fruits and vegetables.
- ? Locate vending machines in less accessible places in the school—not inside of, or in front of, the lunchroom.
- ? Give students price incentives to purchase healthy food and beverages from vending machines, school stores, canteens, and the cafeteria.
- ? Develop a system for monitoring the school's nutrition policies and practices.
- ? Encourage the school improvement council to implement and monitor school nutrition improvements at the school.
- ? Offer annual awards and recognition to individual students as well as clubs and other student groups for new and innovative ideas to improve school nutrition.
- ? Increase the amount of nutrition education that students receive through health education classes and integration of the subject of nutrition into core academic areas.
- ? Assess the school's health education program, including nutrition education, to ensure its effectiveness and its adherence to the South Carolina health and safety education curriculum standards.
- Pevelop a plan to monitor the height and weight of individual students and the overall student population over time.
- ? Partner with other interested organizations to implement school nutrition improvements.

Student Physical Activity

The federal Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that children and teenagers be physically active for an accumulation of at least 60 minutes daily (USDHHS and USDA 2000, 12). Since children spend the majority of their time at school during weekdays, it is logical that the school be a mechanism for providing them with physical activity opportunities for better health. The PE program is one of the primary means of educating students with regard to physical skills and the value of participating in physical activity throughout their lives. Due to time constraints and budget shortages, however, PE programs have been eroded, particularly at the elementary level. The federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and an increased emphasis on accountability in the core subjects of mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies have taken away some of the time that students once had for PE, physical activity clubs, and intramural sports. Increased traffic and concerns for student safety, along with the fact that more and more schools are being built on rural parcels away from neighborhoods, have lead to a dramatic decrease in the numbers of students who walk or bike to school—and thus to the elimination of another opportunity for physical activity for children.

The recommendations from the physical activity workgroup of the SDE's Task Force on Student Nutrition and Physical Activity that follow here are the result of much study and discussion about the physical activity needs of school-aged children and the best ways to provide them with increased opportunities to be physically active. These recommendations are made in the best interest of children and with the recognition that under current budget constraints, policy makers, administrators, parents, and community members will have to be creative in finding the required fiscal, human, and physical resources needed to change the trend of overweight and obesity among our youth.

A school's PE program, which should be conducted by a certified physical education specialist, should provide the major opportunity for students to be physically active each day. Additional opportunities for physical activity should be offered to students during the school day as well as after school, and safe routes should be provided for them to walk or bike to and from school wherever possible.

I. School Accountability and Assessment of Student Physical Activity

School programs should be evaluated for their effectiveness in teaching to the state curriculum standards and in meeting other desired objectives. South Carolina's curriculum standards for PE, which were approved by the State Board of Education in 2000, set forth a shared vision of what students should know and be able to do. The assessment of PE programs, as well as the reporting of the results of those assessments, holds schools accountable for meeting the curriculum standards and provides schools with constructive feedback for program improvement.

The school improvement council (SIC) is the logical vehicle to monitor the local school health improvement program. SICs, which are charged by state law to develop a five-year school improvement plan to increase student achievement in all areas, can ensure that school health improvement strategies are implemented.

SDE RECOMMENDATIONS:

SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY AND ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- A. Assess the policy, program, and environmental needs of the school's students with regard to physical activity by incorporating the Centers for Disease Control's *School Health Index* (CDC 2002) into the planning process of SIC.
- B. Assess the school's PE program for effectiveness and adherence to the South Carolina physical education curriculum standards using the South Carolina Physical Education Assessment model.
- C. Assess at regular intervals the physical fitness of each student enrolled in PE and report the results to the students and their parents, along with recommendations for improvement.
 - ? Develop policy for the school to provide to the parents of each student enrolled in PE a health-related fitness report that includes body mass index.
 - ? Develop policy that provides for each student enrolled in PE to monitor and record the time, level, and kind of activity that he or she participates in.

II. School Requirements and Opportunities for Physical Activity

In order to improve the health and fitness of our students, we must put increased emphasis on both the *quality* and the *quantity* of physical education in our public schools. PE classes provide our students with the main opportunity that they will have to acquire the skills necessary for living a healthy, active lifestyle.

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education recommends PE instruction for a minimum of 150 minutes per week for elementary students and 225 minutes per week for middle and high school students (NASPE 2004, 5). Currently in South Carolina there are no minimum time requirements for PE classes in kindergarten through grade eight. All students in grades nine through twelve must complete a one-Carnegie-unit course consisting of one semester of personal fitness and wellness and a one semester of lifetime fitness, as prescribed by State Board of Education Regulation 43-234. Other PE classes should provide students with the opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills they will need in order to participate in lifetime fitness and physical activities.

A school's providing additional opportunities for students to be physically active is crucial to their getting the accumulated 60 minutes of daily exercise recommended by the federal government (USDHHS and USDA 2000, 12). Seven in ten adult Americans say they walked or bicycled to school when they were children. Today, only 17 percent of students in the United States walk to school (Belden Russonello & Stewart 2003, 11). Even among those students who live within a mile of school, only about 31 percent walk to school (USDHHS 2000, 2:22-27).

Data on walking and cycling to school are not systematically collected in South Carolina. However, in 2000 a small pilot study of a suburban neighborhood school in Lexington County, South Carolina, found that 30 percent of fourth and fifth graders lived within one mile of their school but that of those, only 8 percent walked to school, and less than 1 percent bicycled. The vast majority of the students—81 percent—were driven to school by their parents (Tudor-Locke et al. 2001).

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has asserted that that "up to 25 percent of all morning traffic in the U.S. comes from parents driving kids to school"—"Traffic around schools is heavy each morning; and cars line up, engines idling, waiting in the afternoons, increasing air pollution in our neighborhoods" ("Walking, Biking to School" 2004). This increased traffic around schools not only prompts even more parents to drive their children to school but also creates a level of air quality near the schools that causes problems for children with asthma, aggravates allergies, and increases the incidence of bronchitis and other respiratory ailments. As Dr. Evelyn Daniels, children's environmental health coordinator for the EPA's Dallas region, emphasizes, "Walking or biking to school reduces air pollution and offers respiratory health benefits to children" ("Walking, Biking to School" 2004).

SDE RECOMMENDATIONS: SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- A. Increase PE class time requirements to provide 150 minutes of physical education per week for students in kindergarten through grade eight; increase the PE class time requirement to the equivalent of 3 units of high school credit in grades nine through twelve.
 - ? Ensure that these classes are taught by a PE specialist.
 - ? Align physical education instruction with the South Carolina physical education standards.
 - ? Provide age-appropriate equipment and facilities adequate for implementing the program.
 - ? Provide information to parents to help them encourage students to engage in daily physical activity.
 - ? Ensure that concepts concerning health and lifelong physical fitness are emphasized and taught to all students.
 - ? Schedule PE in all grades so that students engage in physical activity either every day or on alternate days throughout the school year.
- B. Provide students with opportunities for physical activity during the school day through daily recess periods, elective PE classes, walking programs, and the integration of physical activity into the academic curriculum.
 - ? Provide recess daily for all children in kindergarten through eighth grade.

- ? Do not withhold recess as a punishment.
- ? Start the school day with some type of physical activity.
- ? Integrate physical activity into the core subject areas.
- ? Use physical activity as a reward in place of food or candy.
- ? Implement intramural programs before school, during lunch, and/or after school for middle and high school students
- ? Provide students with opportunities to participate in physical activity electives or clubs during the school day.
- C. Offer increased opportunities for physical activity through a range of after-school programs including intramurals, interscholastic athletics, and physical activity clubs.
 - ? Make school physical activity facilities available during nonschool hours.
 - ? Support the participation of students in appropriate community-based physical activity programs.
 - ? Offer on-site after-school programs that provide all participating students with significant amounts of physical activity as well as support for academic and positive social development.
 - ? Provide comprehensive intramural/recreational physical activity programs that address the physical activity needs and interests of all students.
 - ? Provide comprehensive interscholastic sports programs that attract the participation of comparable numbers of girls and boys.
- D. Create an environment that is safe and supportive of students' physically active commuting to and from school.
 - ? Encourage walking and bicycling to school as the preferred transportation modes for students who reside within one mile of the school.
 - ? Create a safe walking and bicycling environment around the school.
 - ? Form a school-community planning team that includes students, parent-teacher organizations, law enforcement representatives, city and/or county transportation engineers, city and/or county planners, city and/or county elected officials, fire/EMS representatives, neighborhood association representatives, and parents or other community volunteers.
 - ? Encourage the school-community planning team to use a survey instrument to assess walking or biking safety concerns near the school.

- ? Encourage the school-community planning team to create and implement a five-year plan to increase the numbers of students who walk and bike to school and to report on progress at the end of the five- year period.
- ? Provide bicycle racks on the school campus.
- ? Provide students with traffic safety education for pedestrians and bicycle riders.
- ? Provide parents with information on the health benefits of walking and biking to school.
- ? Provide parents with safety education for pedestrians and bicycle riders and give them maps of safe routes for biking and walking to the school.
- ? Work with communities to ensure that sidewalks and/or bike paths exist to provide connectivity among neighborhoods and to allow safe access to recreation centers, libraries, and other after-school destinations.

IMPLEMENTATION METHODS: SDE STUDENT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ? Provide staff development for PE teachers on the implementation of the state-required PE course.
- ? Provide staff development on the implementation of the South Carolina Physical Education Assessment Program.
- ? Report program evaluation scores for the implementation of the physical education standards in elementary, middle, and high schools to parents and the public.
- ? Use the FITNESSGRAM program to assess student fitness.
- ? Develop a schedule for implementing the recommended time requirements for PE classes.
- ? Teach health education as a separate course rather than as a unit of study within the required PE course.
- ? Ensure that dance is taught by dance educators and that dance is available in addition to the regular PE program at all levels.
- ? Ensure that the national PE, dance, and health standards are the focus of all programs.
- ? Develop a walking school bus program at the elementary level.
- ? Ensure that your school participates in the annual Walk to School Day event.
- ? Use a survey to determine safe walking and biking routes to school.

- ? Provide crossing guards near the school.
- ? Provide bike and pedestrian safety education to students, parents, and faculty.
- ? Provide maps showing safe routes for students to walk and bike to and from school.
- ? Hold a bike rodeo to teach students about bike safety.
- ? Create incentives for students to walk or bike to school.

Nutrition and Physical Activity Resources on the Internet

Action for Healthy Kids organization

http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/

American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance

http://www.aahperd.org/

American Cancer Society

http://www.cancer.org

American Council on Exercise

http://www.acefitness.org

American Heart Association

http://www.americanheart.org

American School Food Service Association

http://www.asfsa.org/

CDC Division of Adolescent and School Health

http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/

Center for Science in the Public Interest

http://cspinet.org

Community Learning Network's Fitness Theme Page

http://www.cln.org/themes/fitness.html

Cooper Institute

http://www.cooperinst.org/default.asp

Dole "5 A Day"

http://www.dole5aday.com/

International Walk to School

http://www.walktoschool-usa.org/

Note

International Walk to School Day is always the Wednesday of the first full week in October. In 2004, it is Wednesday, October 6.

The South Carolina Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and the South Carolina Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity have created two grant opportunities to encourage schools to participate: the Walk to School Day grant and the Safe Routes to School grant. Application forms are available online at http://www.sccppa.org/grant/index.html.

Kentucky Department of Education site on physical activity and nutrition integration resources

http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Administrative+Resources/School+Health/Physical+Activity+and+Nutrition+Integration+Resources.htm

Marin County, California, Bicycle Coalition

http://www.marinbike.org/Index.htm

Marin County, California, Safe Routes to School

http://www.saferoutestoschools.org

National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity

ttp://www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/nana.html

National Association of State Boards of Education's Healthy Schools page

http://www.nasbe.org/HealthySchools/index.html

National Conference of State Legislatures, Physical Activity and Nutrition site

http://www.ncsl.org/programs/health/phyact.htm

National Dairy Council, Nutrition and Product Information

http://www.nationaldairycouncil.org/nutrition/child/

National School Lunch Program, USDA Food and Nutrition Service

http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Lunch/default.htm

Partnership for a Walkable America's Walk and Bike to School site

http://www.walktoschool.org/

Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center

- http://www.walkinginfo.org
- http://www.bicyclinginfo.org

President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports

http://www.fitness.gov/

Prevention Research Center, Arnold School of Public Health, University of South Carolina

http://prevention.sph.sc.edu/

Society for Public Health Education

http://www.sophe.org

Society of State Directors of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation

http://www.thesociety.org/

South Carolina Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance

http://www.scahperd.org/about.html

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control

http://www.scdhec.net/

South Carolina Governor's Council on Physical Fitness

http://www.scdhec.gov/hs/comhlth/gcpf/links.htm

South Carolina Healthy Schools

http://www.myscschools.com/offices/ace/healthyschools/

Surface Transportation Policy Project's 2002 summary of safe routes to school programs in the United States

http://www.transact.org/report.asp?id=49

USDA, Healthy School Meals Resource System

http://schoolmeals.nal.usda.gov/

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Appendix

USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans

The following text is taken, with editorial and formatting modifications, from the brochure titled *Using the Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, published as Program Aid 1676 (September 2000) by the United States Department of Agriculture. This brochure as well as the complete 40-page booklet, *Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for American* (5th ed., 2000), may be viewed and downloaded from http://www.usda.gov/cnpp.

Eating is one of life's greatest pleasures. There are many foods and many ways to build a healthy diet and lifestyle . . . so there is lots of room for choice. Enjoy the food you and your family eat and take action for good health.

By following these guidelines, you can promote your health and reduce your risk for chronic diseases such as heart disease, certain cancers, diabetes, stroke, and osteoporosis. These diseases are leading causes of death and disability among Americans.

The ABC's of nutrition for your health and that of your family are



Aim for fitness.



Build a healthy base.



Choose sensibly.



AIM FOR FITNESS . . .

- ? Aim for a healthy weight—balance the calories you eat with physical activity.
- ? Get moving. Do 30 minutes or more of moderate physical activity most days or every day. Make physical activity part of your daily routine.
- ? Choose foods and amounts of food according to chart 1, below. Eating sensible portion sizes (see immediately below) is one key to a healthy weight.
- ? Set a good example for children. Eat healthy meals and enjoy regular physical activities together. Children need at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily.

CHOOSE SENSIBLE PORTION SIZES

- ? If you're eating out, order small portions, share an entree with a friend, or take part of the food home (if you can chill it right away).
- ? Check product labels to see how much food is considered to be a serving. Many items sold as single portions actually provide 2 servings or more—such as a 20-ounce soft drink, a 12-ounce steak, a 3-ounce bag of chips, or a large bagel.
- ? Be especially careful to limit portion size of foods high in calories, such as cookies, cakes, other sweets, french fries, and fats, oils, and spreads.



BUILD A HEALTHY BASE...

Use the Food Guide Pyramid (see figure 1, below) to help make healthy food choices that you can enjoy. For children two to six years old, see the Pyramid for Young Children (figure 2, below). Chart 1 gives a quick guide to Pyramid food groups and servings.

- ? Build your eating pattern on a variety of grains, fruits, and vegetables.
- ? Include several servings of whole grain foods daily—such as whole wheat, brown rice, oats, and whole grain corn.
- ? Enjoy five a day—eat at least 2 servings of fruit and at least 3 servings of vegetables each day. Choose dark-green leafy vegetables, orange fruits and vegetables, and cooked dry peas and beans often.
- ? Also choose foods from the milk and the meat and beans groups each day. Make low-fat choices most often.
- ? It's fine to enjoy fats and sweets occasionally.



CHOOSE SENSIBLY ...

- ? Limit your use of solid fats, such as butter and hard margarines. Use vegetable oils as a substitute.
- ? Choose fat-free or low-fat types of milk products, and lean meats and poultry (see chart 2, below). Eat cooked dry beans and peas and fish more often.
- ? Use the "Nutrition Facts" label to help choose foods lower in total fat—especially saturated fat—as well as in cholesterol and sodium.
- ? Limit your intake of beverages and foods that are high in added sugars. Don't let soft drinks or sweets crowd out other foods you need, such as milk products or other calcium sources.
- ? To keep your sodium intake moderate, choose and prepare foods with less salt or salty flavorings.
- ? If you are an adult and choose to drink alcoholic beverages, do so sensibly—limit intake to one drink a day for women or two a day for men.

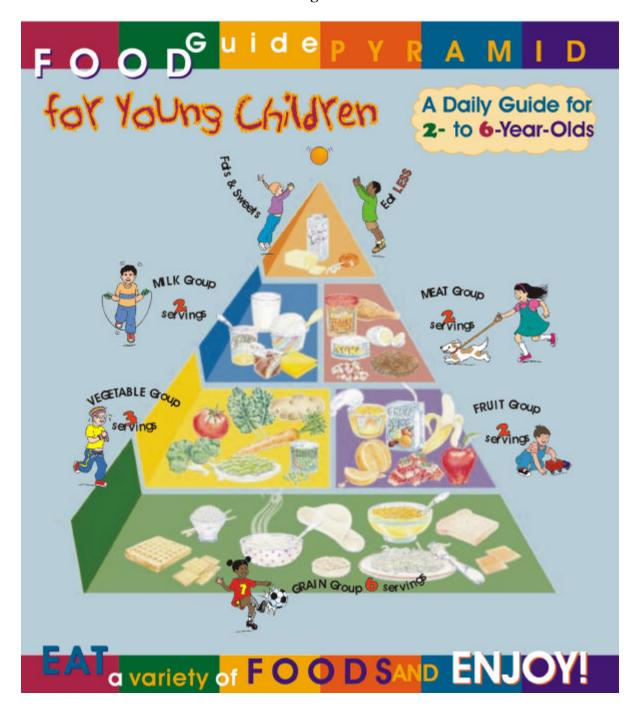
Figure 1



Chart 1
How to Use the Food Guide Pyramid

	How many servings do you need each day?		
What Counts as a Serving?	1,600 calories*	2,200 calories*	2,800 calories*
Bread, Cereal, Rice, and Pasta Group ? 1 slice of bread ? about 1 cup of ready-to-eat cereal ? ½ cup of cooked cereal, rice, or pasta	6	9	11
Vegetable Group ? 1 cup of raw leafy vegetables ? ½ cup of other vegetables—cooked or raw ? ¾ cup of vegetable juice	3	4	5
Fruit Group ? 1 medium apple, banana, orange, pear ? ½ cup of chopped, cooked, or canned fruit ? ¾ cup of fruit juice	2	3	4
Milk, Yogurt, and Cheese Group—preferably fat free or low fat ? 1 cup of milk*** or yogurt ? 1½ ounces of natural cheese (such as Cheddar) ? 2 ounces of processed cheese (such as American)	2 or 3**	2 or 3**	2 or 3**
Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs, and Nuts Group—preferably lean or low fat ? 2–3 ounces of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish	2, for a total of 5 ounces	2, for a total of 6 ounces	3, for a total of 7 ounces
These count as 1 ounce of meat: ? ½ cup of cooked dry beans or tofu ? ½ ounce soyburger ? 1 egg ? 2 tablespoons of peanut butter ? 1/3 cup of nuts			
* Recommended number of servings depends on your calorie needs: ? 1,600 calories is about right for children ages two to six years, many sedentary women, and some older adults.	*** This includes lactose-free and lactose- reduced milk products. Soy-based beverages with added calcium are an option for those who prefer a nondairy source of calcium.		
 ? 2,200 calories is about right for most children over six, teen girls, active women, and many sedentary men. ? 2,800 calories is about right for teen boys and active men. 	NOTE: Many of the serving sizes given above are smaller than those on the "Nutrition Facts" label. For example, one serving of cooked cereal, rice, or pasta is 1 cup for the label, but only ½ cup for the Pyramid.		
** Children and teens ages nine to eighteen years and adults over age fifty need 3 servings daily; others need 2 servings daily.			

Figure 2



Four- to six-year-olds can eat the serving sizes shown in chart 1. Offer two- to three-year-olds less, except for milk. Two- to six-year-old children need a total of 2 servings from the milk group each day.

The Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children is adapted from the original Food Guide Pyramid.

Chart 2
Compare the Saturated Fat in Foods

Food Category	Saturated Fat Content in Grams
Cheese—1 oz.	
Regular Cheddar cheese	6.0
Low-fat Cheddar cheese*	1.2
Ground Beef—3 oz. cooked	
Regular ground beef	7.2
Extra lean ground beef*	5.3
Milk—1 cup	
Whole milk	5.1
Low-fat (1%) milk*	1.6
Breads—1 medium	
Croissant	6.6
Bagel*	0.1
Frozen Desserts—1/2 cup	
Regular ice cream	4.5
Frozen yogurt*	2.5
Table Spreads—1 tsp.	
Butter	2.4
Soft margarine*	0.7

NOTE: The food categories listed are among the major food sources of saturated fat for U.S. adults and children.

What Is Your Limit on Fat?

Total Calories per Day	Saturated Fat in Grams*	Total Fat in Grams*
1,600	18 or less	53
2,000**	20 or less	65
2,200	24 or less	73
2,500**	25 or less	80
2,800	31 or less	93

^{*} These limits are less than 10 percent of calories for saturated fat, and 30 percent of calories for total fat.

^{*}Choice that is lower in saturated fat.

^{**} Percent Daily Values on "Nutrition Facts" labels are based on a 2,000-calorie diet. Values for 2,000 and 2,500 calories are rounded to the nearest 5 grams to be consistent with the "Nutrition Facts" label.

